

## **PROTECTION AND INTEGRATED CONSERVATION - REHABILITATION POLICY. THE PARADIGM OF THE CITY – MUSEUM OF MTSKHETA (GEORGIA)**

**Alkiviades Pepris \***

### **Introduction**

Today the new aspects on the integrated protection on monuments, group of traditional buildings and archaeological sites have started to implement. Moreover, experts are in research of those methods for the conservation and adaptation of the architectural heritage, which should be based on the principles of the sustainable protection and development. It is most important when we deal with cultural values which are nominated to be included or have already been inscribed on World Heritage List. In those cases it is recognized, that experts and politicians have a common responsibility on protection, as well as that it is absolutely necessary to introduce the contexts of collaboration and common initiatives.

Thus, it is indicated a very important progress on the level of technology (curative or preventive measures), aimed at the conservation of material elements. Whereas the meaning of conservation, protection and adaptation of the monuments and archaeological sites takes new content including them in the frame of a development policy, which is inspired from the values of material (or tangible) as well as that of intangible heritage. The meaning of the “sustainable development” is a dynamical process that demands - apart all - the acceptance of local society. Within this framework the integrated protection strategy of the archaeological sites and monuments and – generally – of the cultural heritage is inscribed and the main and serious problem of its management is faced. The success of a process of this kind is depended mainly on the acceptance of these objectives and is absolutely necessary to be included within the framework of a complex strategic aiming at all factors that play a role to the development of a certain district. Politicians who take decisions, investors, experts, dealers, owners or not, volunteers, local administration, political organizations, non-governmental organizations – all of them would have the need and should find the structure and the mechanism of communication, which means discussions, participations, negotiations and balance of the interests and benefits. Finally, it should be created corresponding structures for cooperation between all these various parts and contributors - experts on the protection of the monuments and archaeological sites. Moreover it is important to conduct poles and general tendencies of the future users.

Within the scope of the over discussed conclusions we would like to put under consideration and discussion topics on the problems of:

- Protection, promotion, adaptation and management.
- Central government services control in accordance with the local authorities and its people.
- Users' altitude, as well as those involved with the protection process.
- Balanced development of the wider area in association with the local tradition, and finally,
- Preservation and appointment of the identity of the cultural material (tangible) and intangible - heritage.

### **The city - museum of Mtskheta (Georgia)**

This is a very brief presentation of a part of a study in process, entrusted by the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO in 2001, for which the author is responsible. The study is for the implementation of a Heritage and Tourist Master Plan in and around the city, permitting the monitoring of conservation, development, renovation and construction works. Mtskheta is a multi-layered city – museum with many architectural monuments and archaeological sites (photo 01). The city was inscribed on W.H.L. in 1994. Mtskheta region is situated just a short distance (approx. 15 km.) from the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi. The most significant of the city's monuments on the World Heritage List are: Svetitskoveli Cathedral of the Catholicate (photo 02); Djvari Monastery - The katholikon church (586/7-604 AD) had a great influence on the development of Georgian architecture (photo 03); Bagineti (Armaztsikhe) - the acropolis of ancient Mtskheta, residence of the Kings of Iberia (photo 04); Samtavro - the largest ancient burial ground in the Caucasus, with more than 4.000 burials (photo 05).

### **General remarks – suggestions for the “traditional” part of the town.**

From the very beginning, emphasis should be given to the possibilities provided by new technologies in implementing a rotating Master Plan, in which the measures taken and their effectiveness are evaluated and modified periodically.

As a result, it will be beneficial for the future body involved in implementing the master plan to maintain and update all data (town planning data, land registry data, and socio-economic data) via a database, which is updated periodically. A key requirement will be close administrative monitoring of the region for a number of years after the initial stages of the project, so that any necessary amendments can be made.

### A) Areas of absolute protection

A.1. It is absolutely essential that the State of Georgia New Urban Planning Law for space organisation be applied as soon as possible. It should include separate sections regarding the protection of architectural heritage and archaeological sites in accordance with the demands of contemporary international legislation and international declarations (Venetia Charter – 1964, Convention for the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage – 1972, Amsterdam Declaration - 1975, Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage in Europe - Granada Convention - 1985, European Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage, Revised in Valetta – 1992, Recommendations: 880(979) of the Parliamentary Assembly and (76)28, R(80)16, R(81)13 of the Committee of Ministers of the European Council).

Á.2. Areas where archaeological excavations are taking place or archaeological finds are being made, and the medieval monuments (churches) need to be immediately declared areas of absolute protection. Any excavation, building activity, reconstruction or addition should not proceed without the primer permission of the Central Archaeological Council, granted after an on-site inspection and a detailed examination of:

- a) A study concerning the purpose and advisability of the project; and
- b) The detailed study of construction, excavation, etc.

### B. Protection – conservation measures for the monuments and the Archaeological sites.

**B.1. Svetitskoveli Cathedral**, despite its great importance, it is now in imminent danger due to large-scale interventions of the local church authorities, in the name of the monastery's current operational needs, without any control by the local or central services responsible (photos 06, 07). All these works should stop immediately.

**B.2. Djvari (Mtsketa Holy Cross) Monastery.** The main church has serious damage and cracks on the outside surfaces, extensive flaking of the external surface of the building stones. Growth of mould, blackening due to soot, incidence of parasites. The restoration of the northern church is actually a "reconstruction", with extensive use of new building stones, destroying the authenticity of the monument (photo 05). Security – railings are inadequate. Sound Insulation Technical Study for creating sound screening by alongside the main road axis that passes by the area,

decreasing the serious traffic noise pollution. The monument is visible from a long distance and therefore it should be the illuminated landmark of the city of Mtskheta at night as well.

### B.3. Organisation and protection needs of the archaeological sites - Bagineti (Armaztsikhe) acropolis and Samtavro burial ground. Recommendations:

- Completion of the systematic excavation works, on – site rectification and conservation – protection work. Construction of permanent protective roofs above the excavation sites and creation of controllable heating and ventilation conditions, conserving archaeological finds in situ in the worst possible weather conditions of the area. Moreover, by covering the archaeological areas with a roof, which in turn will be covered with soil, the areas will be returned to their original condition.
- Full perimetrical protection of the archaeological site with a stone-based metallic railing. Establishment of the boundaries of the sections of the archaeological site that will be accessible to visitors, with routes marked by paved footpaths using local natural paving stones. Ramps set at a gentle incline in areas where the slopes are steep. Wooden walkways with metal bases above the excavation areas.
- Placement of signs alongside routes and monuments in order to provide visitors with explanations and depictions of the original forms of the monuments or to provide characteristic details of how they operated (e.g. the baths).
- Development of essential facilities at the entrance area. Selection of rest spots which afford a particularly beautiful view of the settlement.

### C. Establishing buffer zones to ensure the harmonious development of the structured environment around the protected cultural areas.

"In the surrounding of monuments, within groups of buildings and within sites, each Party undertakes to promote measures for the general enhancement of the environment" (European Council Committee of Ministers, Resolution (76) 28 - Ancillary Measures, article No7). In respect of this, special studies for the protection – improvement – adaptation of the constructed and natural environment in line with the character of the monuments need to be produced concerning the wider area around the above monuments and protected areas. These studies will set out special conditions that will concern both the already existing buildings and – particularly - new buildings erected under pressure to satisfy the contemporary needs.

### D. Signposting – Information about the Monuments and the Archaeological sites.

D.1. A special Study for Signposting Monuments and Archaeological Sites – finds (in Georgian and a western European language) all over the area of the town. Explanatory

signs erected at all monuments and archaeological sites.

D.2. A special Study into Establishing and Signposting Routes within the town (in Georgian and a western European language). Explanatory signs indicating the routes connecting one monument – archaeological site with another.

### **E. Organisational and technical upgrading and recruiting of specialised personnel for the (local) Regional Archaeological Museum.**

E.1. The great value, the timelessness and the plethora of finds in the wider area of the town of Mtskheta make it necessary to construct a New Building for the Regional Archaeological Museum, which will be one of the central museums of Georgia. The possibility of transferring finds currently housed at the Janashia State Museum of Georgia to the New Regional Archaeological Museum should be examined.

E.2. In order to meet the increased specialised demands for conservation of the finds, it is absolutely essential that an exemplary Laboratory for the Conservation of Ceramic, Metal and Stone Artefacts be set up. It follows from this that it is also essential that an exemplary specialized archaeological library should be established.

E.3. We should emphasise the great importance of the finds from this area in the study of the prehistory and history of Georgia and in the study of the cultural interaction – in this area – between the peoples of the Mediterranean Basin and the Black Sea.

E.4. As a result of all this, we consider that the region could become an International Centre for Specialised Studies for students and postgraduate researchers (archaeologists, architects, conservationists, historians, specialists in the observation of flora and fauna), who could study material dating from prehistoric times, through the medieval period and up to and including the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Recommendations**

### **A) Measures Regarding Residents.**

A. 1. Clear building restrictions should be drawn up, which will be implemented via the granting of building permission by local authorities (local government technical service and local archaeological service): These factors – structure surface - roofing surface – structure height (storeys) – proportions of openings (closed and open) – requirement for tiled roofs (and not metallic) – preservation of the view of neighbouring dwellings – use of traditional materials – restrictions imposed on colours of paint used - requirement to use specific types of wood in the fences construction with stone bases etc.- will necessarily be key elements in the preservation of the character of this part of the town (photos 08, 09).

Á. 2. To compensate for the imposition of these restrictive measures, financial and other beneficial incentives for local residents should be provided. Such incentives could be directed towards the following types of case:

- The restoration of old buildings in the protected area to which changes (reversible) have already been made that have altered the character of the settlement.
- New constructions to be of limited size and specific character, aiming at improving living conditions for the residents. New improvements will only be permitted with the approval of the local authorities (local government technical service and local archaeological service). Where any digging works are involved, these will take place only in the presence of an archaeologist.
- Financial measures will be taken to benefit those who own any elements of the architectural heritage (tax relief for purchasing, granting loans, repair work grants etc.).

### **B) Measures regarding the State.**

B.1. As a general principle, a seismic hazard study of the whole town and the wider area must be carried out – initially – and afterwards a zone by zone analysis of the areas around the monuments.

B.2. Putting all mains supplies underground: electricity cables, telephone lines, TV., water and gas mains – which are visible in many areas of the town, either lying on the ground or up in the air, presenting obvious risk to the inhabitants. Supplying a single cable TV- line for each building quarter.

B.3. Traditional stone paving for side roads in the town. Ensuring access for walkers in all suitable spots and the provision of seating. Reclamation of disused facilities (refreshment centres, etc.).

B. 4. Attempts to reclaim disused buildings by state services, equipping them with contemporary facilities.

B. 5. Improving health and safety standards for the settlement and in the riverside zone by removing all the makeshift or illegal structures and rubbish. Transfer of the rubbish dump to another suitable site, with environmentally friendly underground disposal.

### **C) Activation of acceptance mechanisms.**

C. 1. In the efforts to gain acceptance, and much more importantly, to implement the recommendations of the Master Plan which is being designed, a basic factor will be that of obtaining the consent of local residents. Measures such as restricting planning permission (surface), restrictions concerning the height of buildings, traffic and car parks - are disincentives, which must be balanced through with other incentives. These incentives should be either of an economic character (subsidies, loans) or related to the possibility of granting the rest planning surface in another area, which is outside the traditional centre, together with qualitative incentives - such as improvements in living conditions both at a personal and at a community level (Resolution (76) 28, III. – “National integrated conservation policies”).

C. 2. It would be of great benefit to promote a general climate –

a mood – among the locals which has two main elements to it:

- a) A sense that what has been programmed by the Master Plan will be implemented in due course, with responsibility in an atmosphere of assistance - both material and scientific / technical, without any violation of the law, and in a spirit of flexibility rather than rigidity.
- b) At the same time, a sense of pride should be inculcated in the timeless and intercultural historical values of the area, thus encouraging awareness of the need to protect and elevate these values with respect for traditional buildings and the exceptional natural environment - (Resolution (76) 28, III. - D. "Informing and educating the public").

**\* Alkiviades Pepris**

Born on 25.01.1953 in Athens - Greece. Assoc. Prof at Democritus University of Thrace: History of Architecture and Restoration, History of Art, Museum Education. Has elaborated private and public urban planning studies on traditional settlements, management plans for archaeological sites and new buildings. Published many articles in international scientific periodicals and participated to international and Greek congresses on restoration, conservation and rehabilitation of cultural monuments. Member of the Executive Committee of ICOMOS - Greece. Investigation missions for the cultural monuments in former Yugoslavia countries. World Heritage List Evaluation Missions for nominated monuments in Armenia, Georgia, Egypt. Languages: English, Bulgarian, Serbian and Russian.



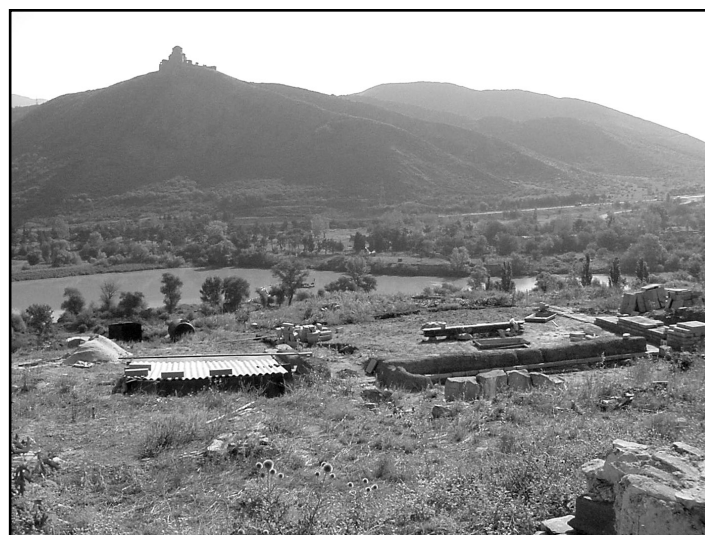
**Photo 01**



**Foto 2**



**Photo 3**



**Photo 4**



**Photo 5**



Photo 6



Photo 7



Photo 8



Photo 9